

at least one urging mechanism interposed between the sample block and the sample well tray, said urging mechanism configured to impart an urging force on the sample well tray,

wherein said urging force urges the sample wells away from the openings in the sample block upon removal of a pressing force imparted on the top of the sample well tray for pressing the sample wells into the openings of the sample block.

2. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said urging mechanism is engageable with the sample well tray.

3. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said urging mechanism comprises a plurality of spring devices.

4. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein at least one of said spring devices is positioned about an outer periphery of the sample block in a region outside of the openings in the sample block.

5. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 4, the sample block further comprising at least one receiving portion for receiving a portion of said at least one spring device.

6. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 5, wherein said at least one spring device comprises a coil spring.

LAW OFFICES

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON,
FARABOW, GARRETT,
& DUNNER, L.L.P.
1300 I STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
202-408-4000

7. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the receiving portion comprises a cylindrical opening for accommodating a portion of the coil spring.

Q1 sub 1 8. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein said plurality of spring devices are positioned substantially symmetric around the periphery of the sample block.

sub 1 10. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the urging mechanism comprises a plurality of spring devices spaced around an outer periphery of a top surface of the sample block, said spring devices being accommodated in cylindrical openings in the sample block, said spring devices engaging a bottom surface of the sample well tray in order to provide the urging force to disengage the sample well tray from the sample block upon opening of a cover for the apparatus, said cover configured to provide the pressing force on top of the sample well tray.

Q2 11. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a sample well tray holder for holding the sample well tray, said sample well tray being movable relative to the sample well tray holder.

12. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said urging mechanism biases the sample well tray holder away from the sample block to thereby urge the sample wells out of the openings in the sample block upon removal of the pressing force which occurs upon the opening of a cover for the sample well tray.

LAW OFFICES

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON,
FARABOW, GARRETT,
& DUNNER, L.L.P.
1300 I STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
202-408-4000

13. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein said urging mechanism comprises a plurality of spring devices.

14. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein a portion of the spring devices are attached to the sample well tray holder.

15. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the spring devices are positioned substantially uniformly around an opening for the sample well tray on the bottom of the sample well tray holder.

16. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, comprising four of said spring devices.

17. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said spring devices comprise leaf springs.

18. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sample wells received by the sample block are sized to have a fluid volume in the range of 10 to 500 μ L.

40. (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said pressing force is sufficient to counteract said urging force to retain the sample well tray against the sample block when said pressing force is imparted.

LAW OFFICES

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON,
FARABOW, GARRETT,
& DUNNER, L.L.P.
1300 I STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
202-408-4000